

BOOK REVIEW

ROY L. LEHMAN. 2013. **Marine Plants of the Texas Coast**. (ISBN-13: 978-1-62349-016-4, flexbound). Texas A&M University Press, 4354 TAMU, College Station, Texas 77843-4354, U.S.A. (**Orders:** www.tamu-press.com, 1-800-826-8911). \$32.00, 205 pp., 264 color photos, map, bibliography, index, 6" × 9".

This 205-page book is an important resource for amateur plant enthusiasts, biologists, conservationists, students, and others with a special interest in coastal ecosystems and natural resources. It includes narrative descriptions, color photos, and specific information on a total of 140 individual species representing 81 genera from 52 families.

A logical, well organized, straightforward, and user-friendly key provides a useful tool to aid in identification of the plants included in the book. One of the details that I found most helpful and practical to a broad audience is that all measurements are listed first in English increments and followed by the metric equivalent in parentheses. The book is organized into four distinct plant groupings: shoreline plants, seagrasses, mangroves, and seaweeds.

The section on shoreline plants includes a small number of the most significant/common grasses, sedges, rushes, and forbs that provide a buffer between the tidal waters and the coastal marshes. Many of these are halophytes (salt-tolerant species) that survive and thrive in the hostile environment of the Texas coast where they are subject to high salinity, periodic inundation, wind and wave action, and harsh xerophytic conditions at times.

The seagrass section contains information about some of the most common seagrasses found in the shallow waters of the coast. In reality, these are not grasses; rather they are submerged aquatic species that have a similar appearance to terrestrial grasses and sedges.

Mangroves are woody species with specialized structural and seed dispersal properties that occur in the muddy tidal flats and shallow tidal waters. They perform many important functions including stabilization of the soil. They also trap debris, filter runoff, and prevent terrestrial organic matter from reaching the coastal waters. Mangroves and seagrasses serve as nurseries and essential habitat for fish, shellfish, and aquatic invertebrates.

The last half of the book is dedicated entirely to seaweeds (macroalgae) of the Texas coastal waters. This section includes 86 species and 45 genera and is subdivided into three subcategories based on color: red, brown, or green. While I have no knowledge and little interest in seaweed, this is apparently one of the most comprehensive discussions of that subject that has been published in a book intended for general use by a wide audience.

The appendices include a glossary and a section on plant collection and preparation techniques. I found the glossary to be very helpful for those, like me, who are not familiar with botanical terminology that is specific to aquatic vegetation and ecosystems. The discussion of plant collection and preparation techniques would be especially useful to those who are collecting and preparing specimens of marine plants. And the color photographs are an interesting and helpful addition to the information provided for each species.

The sections on seagrasses and mangroves were appropriate and provided adequate information on those plant categories. I would have preferred the book to include more species of the major shoreline plants, particularly the grasses and sedges, and much less coverage of the seaweeds. However, this book would be a valuable tool for anyone with an interest in the vegetation of the Texas coast.—*Dan Caudle, Independent Grassland Consultant, Weatherford, Texas, U.S.A.*